CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of reserving a space from among a plurality of spaces at a location, said method comprising the steps of:

inputting a reservation request into a reservation system for said location via a graphical user interface (GUI), said reservation request including date and time information;

providing an electronic payment for a selected reservation period corresponding to said reservation request; and

receiving, in response to said providing step, a reservation coupon, which includes an identifying bar code.

2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of visibly displaying said reservation coupon to allow said identifying bar code to be read when said reservation coupon travels through an entrance and an exit of said location.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein when only a predetermined percentage of spaces are available at said location, said providing step includes the step of first bidding for one of said spaces.

4. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

extending said reservation period after said reservation period has begun; and

providing an electronic payment for an extension acquired by said extending step.

5. The method of Claim 1, wherein said space is a parking space, and said method further comprises the step of selecting a valet option with said reservation request, wherein a valet parks and delivers a vehicle of said customer at a beginning and an end of said reservation period, respectively.

6. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

connecting a customer terminal to a reservation website via the Internet; and

interacting with said graphical user interface (GUI) to transact said reservation request.

7. The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of setting up a customer account with personal and payment information to reduce customer interface time with said GUI when making said reservation request.

8. A space reservation system comprising:

a database of locations that each provide a plurality of spaces that may be reserved;

a graphical user interface that receives a customer's request for a space at one of said locations;

an availability utility that determines whether said space is available; and

output means for, in response to said space being available, providing said customer with a print-out of a reservation coupon containing information by which access to said location is controlled.

9. The system of Claim 8, further comprising a customer terminal on which said GUI is displayed.

10. The system of Claim 8, further comprising an auctioning utility that:

monitors a number of spaces available at each of said locations; and

in response to a reservation request at a location that has less than a predetermine number of spaces available, activates an auction for each of said number of spaces available, wherein each space is reserved to a highest bidder.

11. The system of Claim 8, further comprising a server on which said GUI and said availability utility are executed, wherein said server is coupled to said database of locations and periodically updates said database of location.

12. The system of Claim 11, further comprising a location monitoring mechanism linked to said server and which monitors an entrance and exit of said location to determine when said space is utilized and provides feedback of a utilization of said space to said server.

13. The system of Claim 12, wherein said reservation coupon includes a bar code readable by a remote bar code scanner, wherein further said location monitoring mechanism includes said remote bar code scanner and monitors an entry into and exit from said location by said reservation coupon.

14. The system of Claim 12, wherein said server automatically updates said database of locations in response to both an acceptance of a reservation request and said utilization.

15. The system of Claim 13, wherein, when said utilization exceeds a reservation period, a charge is accrued and billed to said customer.

16. The system of Claim 8, further including a season adjusting utility that dynamically increases customer's cost for said space during a high reservation period.

17. The system of Claim 8, further comprising an extension utility that allows said customer to extend a reservation request after said reservation period has begun.

18. The system of Claim 8, wherein said system is a car parking control system for a terminal parking location, wherein said car parking control system is linked to a flight reservation system and automatically processes a request for said reservation at a terminal parking location for an airline passenger upon selection of a car reservation option from within a flight reservation GUI.

19. The system of Claim 8, wherein said location offers open reservation that allows any one of a plurality of spaces within said location to be utilized by a customer with a reservation coupon.

20. A computer program product comprising:

a computer readable medium;

program instructions stored on said computer readable medium for:

managing a database of locations that each provide a plurality of spaces that may be reserved;

providing a graphical user interface that receives a customer's request for a space at one of said locations and an availability utility that determines whether said space is available; and

in response to said space being available, outputting to said customer a printable reservation coupon containing information by which access to said one location is controlled.

21. The computer program product of Claim 20, wherein said program instructions further comprise instructions for:

monitoring a number of spaces available at each of said locations; and

in response to a reservation request for a location that has less than a predetermine number of spaces available, activating an auction for each of said number of spaces available, wherein each space is reserved to a highest bidder.

22. The computer program product of Claim 20, further comprising program instructions that control receipt of information from a location monitoring mechanism that monitors an entrance and exit of said location to determine when said space is utilized and provides feedback of a said utilization of said space.

23. The computer program product of Claim 20, further including program instructions for implementing a season adjusting utility that dynamically increases customer's cost for said space during a high reservation period.

24. The computer program product of Claim 20, further comprising program instructions for executing an extension utility that allows said customer to extend a reservation request after said reservation period has begun.

25. The computer program product of Claim 20, wherein said computer program controls a car parking reservation system for parking at an airline terminal wherein said car parking control system is linked to a flight reservation system and said program instructions for controlling said car parking reservation system includes instructions for automatically activating and processing a request for reservation at a terminal parking facility for an airline passenger upon selection of a car reservation option from within a flight reservation GUI.

26. A method, carried out by a server communicatively connected to a plurality of clients in a network environment, for managing a parking location having a plurality of separate parking spaces, said method comprising:

receiving, from one of said clients, a parking request for said parking location for a specific duration of time between a beginning time and an ending time;

accessing a database and determining a status of the parking location during the specific duration of time;

sending, over the network to the client, a printable reservation ticket having machine readable information including the beginning time and the ending time and identification information for a user using the client to make the parking request.

27. The method of Claim 26 further comprising:

receiving a request to extend the duration of time with a new ending time for a parking request; and

updating the database with the new ending time.

28. The method of Claim 26, further comprising:

receiving information generated from the parking location as to an actual time that a car of the user enters and leaves the parking location; and

correlating the received information with the identification information read at the parking location from the machine readable information of the reservation ticket used for the car by the user.

29. The method of Claim 28, further comprising an automatic billing system based upon the received information for billing a user identified from the identification information an amount based upon the actual time the car entered and left the parking location and based upon whether the time was within a reserved time specified in the reservation or an extension to the reservation.

30. A method, carried out by a server communicatively connected to a plurality of clients in a network environment, for managing a parking location having a plurality of separate parking spaces, said method comprising:

receiving, from one of said clients, a parking request for said parking location for a specific duration of time between a beginning time and an ending time;

accessing a database and determining a status of the parking location during the specific duration of time; and

initiating an auction for a parking reservation for the parking location if the status of the parking location indicates a certain level of demand during the duration of time.

31. A method, carried out by a server communicatively connected to a plurality of clients in a network environment, for managing a parking location having a plurality of separate parking spaces, said method comprising:

receiving, from one of said clients, a parking request for said parking location for a specific duration of time between a beginning time and an ending time;

accessing a database and determining a status of the parking location during the specific duration of time; and

notifying a valet service to pick up a car at a designated location and to park the car at the parking location if the status of the parking location indicates an availability of one of the separate parking spaces for the duration.